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UNHCR ACTIVITIES FINANCED BY VOLUNTARY FUNDS: REPORT FOR 1993-1994 AND PROPOSED PROGRAMMES AND BUDGET FOR 1995

PART IV. THE AMERICAS AND THE CARIBBEAN

Section 2 - Belize

(submitted by the High Commissioner)

GE.94-03023

IV.2 BELIZE

Country Overview

Characteristics of the refugee population

1. At 31 December 1993, Belize hosted 8,912 refugees, as well as some 20,000 immigrants and others from neighbouring Central American countries, who together comprise approximately 15 per cent of the country's total population. Approximately 66 per cent of the refugees are of Salvadorian origin, 26 per cent are Guatemalans and the remaining 8 per cent are from various other Caribbean, African and Latin American countries. By late 1993, assistance was provided to some 2,100 persons, representing 23 per cent of the recognized refugee caseload. Because Belize imposes no restrictions on the freedom of movement for refugees, the refugee population is widely dispersed over 66 per cent of the country's 200 rural villages with major concentrations in the three central districts of the country: Belize, Cayo and Stann Creek Districts. The refugee population remained relatively stable in 1993, with few opting for voluntary repatriation and few new cases being recognized as refugees.

2. A UNHCR survey conducted in 1993 allowed the office to quantify the number of refugees in Belize more precisely, and also revealed that refugee families are both socially and economically vulnerable, and generally live in poorer conditions than Belizean nationals in the same villages. The majority of refugees are involved in small-scale agriculture, primarily subsistence farming. Twenty per cent of refugee households are headed by women, the majority of them widows. Almost half of the refugee population is made up of children. For refugees, particularly those who are undocumented, lack of access to land and proper legal status pose significant barriers to integration. Refugees in Belize settle spontaneously throughout the country. In 1993, approximately 10 per cent of the recognized refugee population
received temporary care and maintenance assistance from UNHCR through its implementing partner.

Programme objectives and priorities

3. Given the relatively stable nature of the refugee and immigrant population, its socio-economic vulnerability, and its wide dispersion, the main objective for the coming two years is to stabilize and consolidate the integration of refugees with other members of their communities by promoting community-based socio-economic activities. A programme emphasizing community protection and integration activities will continue to promote legal, social and economic integration, including human rights training and economic self-sufficiency, with particular attention paid to vulnerable groups.

4. Voluntary repatriation will continue to be facilitated for those refugees who wish to return to their countries of origin, although the majority of recognized refugees in Belize have indicated that they would prefer to integrate locally. Protection activities will support resettlement in third countries for small numbers of eligible refugees with serious medical problems who cannot be treated in Belize, such as women at risk and others with security concerns.

UNHCR will continue its support to eligible refugees requesting reunification with family members.

Arrangements for implementation/related inputs

5. The two major implementing partners for the priority activities described above are the Government's Refugee Department and the non-governmental Belize Council of Churches. For Special Programmes geared to local integration, the primary implementing partner is the International Rescue Committee. Refugee status determination and the bulk of community protection activities are implemented by the Refugee Department with assistance from UNHCR protection staff. The Belize Council of Churches handles material assistance and economic integration activities, including education, training, vocational skills development and income-generation projects to promote self-sufficiency. The Human Rights Commission of Belize held a number of successful human rights workshops in 1993 and has planned training activities for community leaders in 1994.

General Programmes

(a) **Variations in planned activities in 1993**

6. The overall refugee population remained relatively stable in 1993. Vocational training and income-generation activities were reinforced in order to promote economic self-sufficiency with particular focus on those with special needs.

(b) **1994 planned implementation**

7. The 1994 programme will continue to focus on economic self-sufficiency, in particular for women refugees and vulnerable groups, including single parent families, elderly and disabled people, unaccompanied minors, and newly-recognized refugees. Emphasis will be given to disseminating information about existing income-generation opportunities. Vocational skills training and small business activities such as poultry-raising and cattle-rearing are planned, in addition to material assistance, education, counselling and orientation activities.

8. A more ambitious protection and human rights training programme to promote integration will enhance the awareness that refugees, undocumented immigrants and Belizeans (including new government staff and village leaders) have of their fundamental human rights, their obligations and duties, as well as those rights defined in international instruments. Community leaders identified during the workshops in 1993 will be trained to provide human rights information and assistance to communities with a large concentration of refugees.

(c) **1995 programme proposals**

9. It is estimated that by the end of 1994, only 3 per cent of the total refugee population will require assistance from UNHCR. Consequently, 1995 programme requirements reflect a reduction in staff of implementing partners, as expected, as well as a smaller caseload in need of assistance.

10. UNHCR will continue to play an active role in the training and monitoring of the refugee determination system to ensure access to procedures and adequate, fair and expeditious processing. Protection activities include counselling for individual cases and emphasize the obtention of work permits and naturalization for those who qualify.

Special Programmes

(a) Variations in planned activities in 1993

11. Owing to a lack of funds early in the year, micro-credit activities could not be implemented as originally scheduled. However, 145 loans were made and 180 beneficiaries were trained. In the last quarter of the year, the Office initiated a quick impact project (QIP) programme to support the integration of refugees at community level.

(b) 1994 planned implementation

12. A total of 40 QIPs are planned for 1994 along with micro-credit activities. The 1994 and 1995 QIPs programme emphasizes strengthening the institutional capacity of national organizations, particularly local NGOs in the agricultural sector, in the context of phasing down UNHCR's presence in Belize. Projects include the production and marketing of peanuts, beans, rice, papayas and off-season vegetables, as well as machinery services and fibre handicrafts. Other projects include the construction of schools, health posts, women's shelters, a craft centre and water systems. Efforts will continue with government bodies and other United Nations and international agencies to promote the integration of the refugee and immigrant population into national development plans and activities in the country.

(c) 1995 programme proposals

13. A phased down QIP programme will continue in 1995 in order to ensure the orderly transfer of development-related activities accomplished in 1993 and 1994 to NGOs and government ministries. Approximately 20 individual micro-projects will be implemented, especially within the agriculture and income-generation sectors. Activities to ensure the sustainability of QIPs will be emphasized during this final year of the programme.

Programme Delivery and Administrative Support Costs

(a) Variations in planned activities in 1993

14. Programme delivery and administrative support costs in Belize in 1993 were in accordance with planned levels.

(b) 1994 planned implementation

15. It is planned that staffing in 1994 will remain at the 1993 level, although two new United Nations Volunteers (UNVs) will assist in strengthening UNHCR's field protection presence in accordance with the priority given to this

objective in 1994 and 1995. Non-staff costs have also been maintained at the initial level.

c) **1995 programme proposals**

16. Due to the anticipated decrease in the caseload and the phasing down of programmes, UNHCR intends to reduce its presence in Belize in 1995. At this juncture, all time-limited posts have been extended to 31 December 1995 and non-staff costs have been budgeted at similar levels to the revised 1994 budget.

UNHCR EXPENDITURE IN BELIZE

(in thousands of United States dollars)

1993	1994		1995	
AMOUNT OBLIGATED	ALLOCATION APPROVED BY 1993 EXCOM	PROPOSED REVISED ALLOCATION	SOURCE OF FUNDS AND TYPE OF ASSISTANCE	PROPOSED ALLOCATION/ PROJECTION
GENERAL PROGRAMMES (1)				
984.2	991.7	591.9	LOCAL SETTLEMENT	456.6
2.6 a/	–	–	RESETTLEMENT	–
–	–	409.4	PROGRAMME DELIVERY See Annexes I a and II a	386.8
986.8	**991.7**	**1,001.3**	**SUB–TOTAL OPERATIONS**	**843.4**
57.7	62.4	37.3	ADMINISTRATIVE SUPPORT See Annexes I b and II b	39.3
1,044.5	1,054.1	1,038.6	T O T A L (1)	882.7
SPECIAL PROGRAMMES (2)				
1,515.2	1,513.8	2,401.6	OTHER TRUST FUNDS CIREFCA/PRODERE	840.0
–	–	15.2	PROGRAMME DELIVERY See Annexes I a and II a	25.9
115.7	88.0	124.0	ADMINISTRATIVE SUPPORT Junior Professional Officer	124.0
1,630.9	1,601.8	2,540.8	T O T A L (2)	989.9
2,675.4	2,655.9	3,579.4	GRAND TOTAL (1+2)	1,872.6

a/ obligation incurred against Overall Allocation